

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, April 27, 2012

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Action Item Calendar

Today (April 27): Deadline for submitting to RIDE [district Teacher of the Year](#) selections

Today (April 27): Recommendations for [Educator Talent Pool](#) due

Today (April 27): LEA [testing schedules](#) due

Today (April 27): [PARCC Item Review Committee](#) nominations due

Tuesday (May 1): [Asset Protection Plans](#) due

May 25: Professional Learning Community grant applications due (see below)

June 8: Data collection for [PARCC Technology Readiness](#) Tool due

June 30: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)

July 15: Deadline for final reporting of [evaluation ratings](#)

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. RIDE announces mini-grant opportunity for Professional Learning Communities

As we work together to improve teaching and learning and to accelerate all schools toward greatness, RIDE will use Race to the Top funding to provide mini-grant awards to enable Rhode Island educators to work collaboratively in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Through a competitive-grant process, existing or newly formed PLCs may apply for mini-grants to advance their work in one of three areas that support student achievement and the spirit and goals of Race to the Top:

- using the Common Core State Standards;
- closing achievement gaps; or
- developing innovative approaches to building effective parent-teacher partnerships.

We will determine the amount to be awarded to each PLC, which can be up to \$5,000 a year, based on the scope of what each application proposes. In addition to the award to the PLC for project work, each PLC member will be eligible to receive a \$500 annual stipend for his or her participation in the project.

The PLC project work may span up to two years, from July 1, 2012, to June 30, 2014. At the close of the lifespan of the funded PLCs, the PLCs will convene in a statewide conference to present their work to fellow educators.

The idea for this grant came from Rhode Island teachers, and we are excited that Race to the Top funds enable us to support such a wonderful opportunity for teachers who wish to work collaboratively around a specific goal.

The [application](#) is available on our website. All applications are due to RIDE by Friday, **May 25**. Please see the application for more details about the requirements and features of this opportunity. You can direct any questions about PLC grants to Nicole Shaffer, at nicole.shaffer@ride.ri.gov.

Please share this information with the teachers in your LEA.

2. U.S. Department of Education team completes Race to the Top on-site review

Winning a Race to the Top grant was a great honor for Rhode Island, and the Race to the Top award has provided us with invaluable resources that have helped us move forward with our strategic plan for transforming education in our state. We are fully committed to being good stewards of the Race to the Top funds and to using these resources to meet the goals all of us have established in our Scopes of Work.

The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the Race to the Top winners comply with best practices and manage the grant properly, regarding both programs and finances. This week, a team from the Department visited Rhode Island for an on-site review of our Race to the Top initiative. The four members of the team spent three days at RIDE and then visited several districts – Jamestown, Lincoln, and Providence – to get an idea of how Race to the Top is taking hold at the district and school level. During their visit, they delved deeply into every aspect of our work plan: educator evaluations, study of the standards, formative and interim assessments, support for innovative schools and charter public schools, STEM initiatives, accessing and using data, alternative certification, educator recruitment, professional development, induction, leadership, school turnaround, and the overall management of the grant, including performance management, communications and outreach, and budget and finance.

The feedback we have received so far has been positive. The review team indicated that we are addressing the challenges that have arisen as we implement the grant and that we are ensuring high-quality implementation of the Scope of Work. We expect to conduct an exit call with the team next week, and the team will prepare a progress report for Year 2 of Race to the Top.

I appreciate the support, commitment, and engagement that you and your team members have provided and continue to provide as we work together to transform education in our schools and in our state. I will keep you informed about any follow-up materials or requests we receive as a result of this on-site visit.

3. Secretary Duncan urges support for military-connected children

In recognition of the Month of the Military Child, Education Secretary Arne Duncan has written to all Chief State School Officers, urging us to ensure that all LEAs pay particular attention to the educational needs of military-connected children and their families. Military families face frequent transitions, often from one state to another, and these transitions can affect the academic standing and social integration of children.

Secretary Duncan asks that we make all superintendents aware of various resources that are available to help our work with military-connected children:

One useful resource in this regard is the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which has been adopted by many states. (See www.mic3.net for [Compact language](#).) This Compact, developed by the Council of State Governments, education experts, and the Department of Defense, addresses common problems that affect military-connected children as a result of frequent moves and deployments. For military-connected children with disabilities, a useful resource is the National Parent Training and Information Center-Specialized Training of Military Parents (STOMP) (www.stompproject.org).

The Secretary encourages all superintendents to:

Specifically, I would ask you to encourage your superintendents to:

- review the Compact and consider whether your policies and procedures are consistent with the guidelines and rules set forth under the Compact;
- involve teachers, counselors, instructors, coaches, school nurses, administrators, and students in district efforts to better address the needs of military-connected school children;
- honor and respect the previous academic standing and accomplishments of military-connected children new to your district;
- be flexible and open to ways to help students transfer earned courses or credits to their new school;
- enable implementation of Individual Education Programs as soon as possible and ensure that a free, appropriate public education is provided for military-connected children with disabilities;
- evaluate participation guidelines across your district for extracurricular, after-school, and sports activities to ensure they are welcoming to, and inclusive of, newly arriving students;
- consider revising other programs or policies that inhibit military-connected children's transition; and
- share your success stories with respect to implementation of the Compact (if applicable) and services for military-connected children in your districts; doing so will allow your work to be showcased to other school districts on the Compact's website (www.mic3.net). Please e-mail your stories to Charles Boyer (charles.boyer@ed.gov) with a short paragraph describing the impact of the Compact in your community.

I appreciate your attention to this issue.

From RIDE:

4, Educators sought for participation in NECAP Science development

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE is offering an opportunity for classroom teachers and other educators to participate in the development process of the NECAP Science Assessment for grades 4, 8, and 11. The NECAP Teacher Committees are essential to the work of creating a valid and reliable assessment system. Many of your teachers have participated in these committees and have learned a lot – not only from the process but also from the teachers representing New Hampshire and Vermont.

Please encourage teachers to apply to represent our students as members of one of the Test Development Committees described below. Applications can be found on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/TestDevCmte.aspx>

The Bias & Sensitivity Review Committee will convene for one day, **August 1**, in Stowe, Vermont.

To prepare assessment items for field-testing, all NECAP test items are reviewed to ensure that they are free from language or content that may negatively affect the test performance of a specific group of students. This work is done by a team made up of four educators from each state (Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont), for a total of 12 educators being selected to serve on the Bias & Sensitivity Review Committee. These educators either represent a specific group (e.g., racial, ethnic, or religious groups; rural or urban interests; individuals with disabilities; recent immigrants; English-language learners) or have direct experience working with students from these groups.

To qualify, educators should meet the following criteria:

- have current and direct experience teaching or working with students;
- offer a unique perspective on one or more specific student groups;
- be willing to work intensively with a team of educators for two consecutive days; and
- have experience with the Science GSEs for their grade span.

The Item Review Committee will convene on two days, **August 1 and 2**, in Stowe, Vermont.

Each year, as part of preparing assessment items for field-testing, NECAP science items and the inquiry tasks are reviewed for alignment to the appropriate science assessment target, Depth of Knowledge level, student accessibility, and instructional relevance. This work is done by three content-area teams of 12 educators, with four teachers each from Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont on each team. The Item Review Committees meet once a year.

To qualify, educators should meet the following criteria:

- have advanced knowledge and experience with the Grade Span Expectations;
- have experience teaching at the relevant grade cluster; and
- be willing to work intensively on a team for two or more consecutive days.

Applications are available on line, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/TestDevCmte.aspx>

If you have questions, please contact the following RIDE personnel:

Peter McLaren, at peter.mclaren@ride.ri.gov; or
Dr. Kevon R. Tucker-Seeley, at Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov.

All principals will also receive a copy of this message.

5. Superintendents encouraged to meeting for Growth Model demonstration

Please see this message from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

We encourage you to attend the District Network Meeting, on May 10, from 9 a.m. to noon, in Room 243 at RIDE. RIDE staff will present on the Rhode Island Growth Model

and debut the new Growth Model Visualization Tool, an online tool that enables users to view growth data in a dynamic, user-friendly format. Please note that the tool will not launch on tablets (including iPads), so be sure to bring a fully charged laptop to the meeting so that you can access and explore your district's growth data. If you have any questions, please contact Jessica Brown, at Jessica.Brown@RIDE.RI.GOV or 222-8253, or Ana Karantonis, at Ana.Karantonis@RIDE.RI.GOV or 222-8940.

6. RIDE clarifies Summer Academy attendance requirements

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

After hearing from many of you, we are making adjustments to the attendance requirements at the Summer Academies for personnel responsible for evaluating both teachers and building administrators. Anyone who is responsible for evaluating both teachers and building administrators (e.g., a principal who evaluates teachers and an assistant principal, or a central-office staff member who evaluates teachers and principals) is required to attend only the four-day Summer Academy for Personnel Evaluating Teachers. On the final day of the Summer Academy for Personnel Evaluating Teachers there will be a differentiated session for participants who will also be evaluating building administrators.

For additional information about both Summer Academies, please visit our training registration page, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/TrainingReg.aspx>

7. RIDE recruiting Regents Educator Quality Evaluation Systems Fellow

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

We are seeking an outstanding teacher or administrator to become a Regents' Educator Quality Evaluation Systems Fellow beginning in the next (2012-13) school year. The fellowship is granted and reviewed each year, with a potential of an additional one or two years. We are seeking strong candidates with an understanding of educator evaluation both in Rhode Island and nationally and with demonstrated leadership skills and experience with the implementation of evaluation systems. For additional information about the fellowship, including an application packet, please go to:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Docs/EdQ_EvalSystems_Fellow_Application.doc.

8. Rhode Island Model "Staff Meeting in a Box #3" now available

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

The third toolkit of materials (Staff Meeting in a Box #3) designed to help school and district leaders provide training for teachers about the Rhode Island Model is now available on the RIDE website. Staff Meeting in a Box #3 is focused on preparing for End-

of-Year Conferences, including: the goals and process for the End-of-Year Conference; how Student Learning, Professional Practice, and Professional Responsibilities are scored; and how the Final Effectiveness Rating is calculated.

To download the PowerPoint (with detailed presenter's notes), and a principals' agenda, please visit our Training Resources page, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Training.aspx>

9. West Bay Collaborative to contact LEAs regarding evaluation-guidebook delivery

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

The West Bay Collaborative is coordinating delivery of the new evaluation guidebooks and will be contacting LEAs to confirm the number of guidebooks needed and the delivery location. Delivery of the new guidebooks is scheduled to begin in early June, and our goal is to have all of the guidebooks delivered to LEAs prior to the end of the school year.

10. Reminder: PARCC readiness device inventory reports due June 8

Please see the following message from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

As you may know, the device inventory for PARCC Readiness is in process and ends on June 8. The PARCC test architects will use this baseline inventory as they design the tests. LEAs should use this inventory for device-purchase decisions, including where and how many devices will be needed to administer the PARCC test. There is no other way of determining the technology readiness for the test.

Please follow this link <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/transition.aspx> (*Click on New Statewide Assessment: PARCC and PARCC Device Inventory Status by LEA*) to view your district's inventory results to date, and contact Michael Ferry if you need assistance, at michael.ferry@ride.ri.gov or 222-8258.

Other:

11. Charter Public School Showcase scheduled for May 2

Please see this notice from the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools:

The Rhode Island League of Charter Schools respectfully requests your attendance at our 6th Annual Charter Public School Showcase, where we will bring elected government officials together with charter-public-school faculty, staff and students, as well as members of the general public, in an effort to further educate and advocate for Rhode Island charter public schools and the continuation of positive public-education reform.

The 6th Annual Charter Public School Showcase will take place on Wednesday, May 2, from 3 to 5 p.m., in the State House. The speaking program will begin at 3:15 p.m. in the State Room.

For more information, please contact:

Stephen Nardelli, Executive Director, at 831-3700 ext. 114 or
stevenardelli@richarterschools.com

12. PARCC issues guidance on instructional technology

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers (PARCC), the consortium developing the assessments that Rhode Island will implement in the 2014-15 school year, has issued guidance about purchases of instructional technology to ensure that new devices will be compatible with the next generation of assessments. PARCC (along with the other national consortium, Smarter Balanced) issued a news release on the guidance on Wednesday (April 25), which is available at:

http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=jwhncwbab&v=001UQ183hrEliGpVkyFbfrY-oEWmhGOTkB1jd_Mkh0ZjNuC53ObQuR5k6VHdk9QsrCjEYtjNo1zL8BFCrO7EbEsOWTr209AKo_XnfMWecTcMvw0zYj-PAA9ow%3D%3D

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>